

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

before I depart. The time is short; so that, if it pleased you so, I would fain it were soon." ¹

We have no record of what passed at this interview between Catherine and Gregory—her farewell to him until they should meet again (but once only, as it was to prove) upon Italian soil. At last the Pope's resolution was fixed. The galleys, that for weeks had lain waiting at Marseilles, were secretly made ready, and Gregory suddenly, to the incredulous dismay of the Sacred College, announced his intention of departing instantly.

On September 13, 1376, Gregory came out of the papal palace of Avignon, to return to the seat of the Apostles. A mournful crowd in silence watched the departure. At the door of the palace his aged father, Count Guillaume de Beaufort, threw himself at his feet, crying : " My son, whither art thou going ? Shall I never see thee more?" "It is written," answered the Pope, " *thou shalt trample upon the asp and the basilisk*" And he passed over the prostrate body of his father—so well had he learned the lesson Catherine had striven from the outset to impress upon him, that *tenerezza dei parenti* was one of the first things that Christ wished His vicar to root out from his heart.² From the beginning, evil omens seemed to attend the Pope's departure. His mule started and backed, and could not be made to stir, but another was brought, and Gregory steadfastly went on his way. Six cardinals—including the Cardinal of Pamplona (Pierre de Montirac, Vice-Chancellor of the Church), Gilles Aycelin, and Anglico de Grimoard (who, as archbishop of the city, was staying at his post)—remained at Avignon. The rest, with the other papal officials, accompanied the Sovereign Pontiff in the state procession that moved by slow stages to Marseilles, which they reached on September 20. Here the papal fleet—twenty-two galleys and a number of smaller ships, under the supreme command of the Grand Master of the knights of St. John—lay in

¹ Letter 239 (10), corrected by the Harleian MS.

² Cf. Capecelatro, pp. 262, 263. The story is told in the *Quarta Vita Gregorii XI*, Baluze, I. col. 481, in which the Count's action is wrongly assigned to the Pope's mother, who was already dead.